

CHAPTER 21

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW 21

Ver. 1. *And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem*, etc.] The Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions read, “when he drew nigh, or was near”; but not alone, his disciples were with him, and a multitude of people also; as is evident from the following account. They might well be said to be near to Jerusalem, since it is added,

and were come to Bethphage; which the Jews say^{f1072} was within the walls of the city of Jerusalem, and was in all respects as the city itself, and was the outermost part of it^{f1073}; and that all within the outward circumference of the city of Jerusalem was called Bethphage^{f1074}: it seems to me to be part of it within the city, and part of it without, in the suburbs of it, which reached to Bethany, and that to the Mount of Olives. Various are the derivations and etymologies of this place: some say it signifies “the house”, or “place of a fountain”, from a fountain that was in it; as if it was a compound of “Beth”, an house, and $\pi\eta\eta\eta$, “pege”, a fountain: others, “the house of the mouth of a valley”; as if it was made up of those three words, *ayg yp tyb*, because the outward boundary of it was at the foot of the Mount of Olives, at the entrance of the valley of Jehoshaphat: others say, that the ancient reading was “Bethphage, the house of slaughter”; and Jerom says^{f1075}, it was a village of the priests, and he renders it, “the house of jaw bones”: here indeed they might bake the showbread, and eat the holy things, as in Jerusalem^{f1076}; but the true reading and signification of it is, *ygap tyb*, “the house of figs”; so called from the fig trees which grew in the outward limits of it, near Bethany, and the Mount of Olives; hence we read of^{f1077} *ynyh tyb ygp*, “the figs of Bethany”; which place is mentioned along with, Bethphage, both by Mark and Luke, where Christ, and those with him, were now come: the latter says, they were come nigh to these places, for they were come

to the Mount of Olives; near to which were the furthest limits of Bethany, and Bethphage, from Jerusalem. This mount was so called from the abundance of olive trees which grew upon it, and was on the east side

of Jerusalem ^{f1078}; and it was distant from it a sabbath day's journey, (~~4012~~ Acts 1:12) which was two, thousand cubits, or eight furlongs, and which made one mile:

then sent Jesus two disciples; who they were is not certain, perhaps Peter and John, who were afterwards sent by him to prepare the passover, (~~4218~~ Luke 22:8).

Ver. 2. *Saying unto them, go into the village over against you*, etc.] Munster's Hebrew Gospel reads, "before you"; not Jerusalem, as some have thought, for that would never be called a village; though the Ethiopic version reads it, "the city"; but rather Bethany, which was near to Bethphage, and is mentioned with it; though the Jews say ^{f1079}, the name of the village was Nob, and was near to Jerusalem, and own, that Christ had an ass from hence, on which he rode to Jerusalem, and applied to himself the prophecy in (~~3009~~ Zechariah 9:9). And it is very likely this was the village; for Nob was very near to Jerusalem; it was over against it, within sight of it, and from thence might be taken a view of the whole city, according to the Jews; who say ^{f1080}, that Sennacherib stood in Nob, a city of the priests, over against the walls of Jerusalem, and saw the whole city, and it was little in his eyes; and he said; is not this the city of Jerusalem, etc.

and straightway, or, as in Mark, "as soon as ye be entered into it"; and in Luke, "at your entering", at the town's end, at one of the first houses in it, at the door thereof,

ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her. The other evangelists only make mention of the colt, or young ass; but, no doubt, both were spoken of by Christ, and both were found by the disciples, the ass, and the colt by her, and both were brought away by them; and on both of them, very probably, Christ rode; first on one, and then on the other, as the prophecy hereby fulfilled seems to require, and as the sequel of the account shows. The ancient allegorical sense of the ass and colt is not to be despised: that the ass may signify the Jews, who had been used to bear the burdensome rites and ceremonies of the law; and the colt, the wild and untamed Gentiles, and the coming of Christ, first to the one, and then to the other:

loose them, and bring them unto me, both ass and colt. So the Arabic version reads it, "loose both, and bring them, both to me".

Ver. 3. *And if any man say ought unto you*, etc.] As, what business have you with the ass and colt? why do you loose them? as certain persons, the owners of them did, as Mark and Luke relate;

ye shall say, the Lord hath need of them: he that is our Lord, and your Lord, and the Lord of these creatures, and of all things else, wants them for his present service;

and straightway he will send them: which is either a continuation of what the disciples should say to any that should ask them the reason of their loosing the ass and colt, in order to make them easy: that the Lord who had need of them, as soon as he had done with them, would send them back to their proper owners, safe and well: or they are spoken for the encouragement of the disciples to go, and not be disheartened, though they should be thus examined; for immediately upon saying, that the Lord stood in need of them, and had an use for them at that time, the owner thereof, without any more words, would immediately send them along with them; which latter rather seems to be the sense of the clause; and which is confirmed by Mark: a very clear proof is this of the omniscience of Christ. He knew, that there were an ass, and a colt, in such a village, fastened to such a door, just at the entrance into the town: he knew the owners of it would examine the disciples about loosing and taking them away, and prepares them to give an answer; and he knew that the minds of these owners would be immediately wrought upon, and inclined to let them go directly and quietly.

Ver. 4. *All this was done*, etc.] The disciples were sent to the neighbouring village for the ass and colt, and they brought them, and Christ rode upon them; not because of the distance of the place from Jerusalem, for he was just at it; or because he was weary, or it would be very fatiguing to him to walk thither on foot; for he had been used to travelling, and had gone through most parts of Galilee and Judea; but

that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: the Ethiopic version adds, Isaiah; for the former part of the following citation stands in (2321) Isaiah 62:11) as the latter does in (300) Zechariah 9:9). It was usual with the Jews to cite Scripture in this manner, by taking a part from one writer, and another from another, and joining them together: saying, the following words.

Ver. 5. *Tell ye the daughter of Zion*, etc.] These words seem to be taken out of (²⁸⁶¹Isaiah 62:11) where it is said, “say ye to the daughter of Zion, behold thy salvation cometh”, or “thy Saviour cometh”; meaning, without doubt, the Messiah: by the daughter of Zion is meant, not the city of Jerusalem, but the inhabitants thereof, the Jewish synagogue; or as the Targum renders it, [^]wyxd atcynk, “the congregation of Zion”, the people of the Jews; particularly the elect of God among them, those that embraced the true Messiah, and believed in him:

behold, thy king cometh unto thee: this, and what follow, are cited from (^{300B}Zechariah 9:9) and to be understood of the king Messiah, who, in a little time after this prophecy was given out, was to come to Zion, and redeem Jacob from all his iniquities, and was now come. One of the Jewish commentators says ^{f1081}, that interpreters are divided about the sense of this prophecy; but observes, that there are some that say this is the Messiah: and another ^{f1082} of them affirms, that it is impossible to explain it of any other than the king Messiah; and that it can be understood of no other, I have elsewhere ^{f1083} shown. “Meek”; in the prophecy of Zechariah it is, yn[, “poor”, as the Messiah Jesus was, in a temporal sense; but the word, both by the Septuagint, and our evangelist, is rendered

meek; as it is by the Targum, Jarchi, and Kimchi, who all explain it by [^]twm[, “lowly, humble, or meek”: and a character it is, that well agrees with Jesus, who, in the whole of his deportment, both in life and in death, was a pattern of meekness and lowliness of mind: and

sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass. This is applied to the Messiah by the Jews, both ancient ^{f1084} and modern ^{f1085}, who consider this as an instance and evidence of his humility: they suppose, this ass to be a very uncommon one, having an hundred spots on it; and say, that it was the foal of that which was created on the eve of the sabbath ^{f1086}; and is the same that Abraham and Moses rode upon: and they own, as before observed, that Jesus of Nazareth rode on one to Jerusalem, as is here related. Their ancient governors, patriarchs, princes, and judges, used to ride on asses, before the introduction and multiplication of horses in Solomon’s time, forbidden by the law of God: wherefore, though this might seem mean and despicable at this present time, yet was suitable enough to Christ’s character as a king, and as the son of David, and king of Israel; strictly observing the law given to the kings of Israel, and riding in such manner as they formerly did.

Ver. 6. *And the disciples went*, etc.] The two disciples, as the Arabic version reads, to the village over against them; and, as Mark says, “found the colt tied to the door without, in a place where two ways met”: the house was just at the entrance of the village, at the door of which, on the outside in the street, was the colt fastened, where were two ways of going into, and coming out of the town; so that it was a public place; the colt was easily seen, nor could it well be taken away without being observed, as it was by the owners of it: and

did as Jesus commanded them; they loosed the colt; and whereas whilst they were loosing it, the owners of it asked them, what they meant by so doing? they returned for answer what Christ had directed them to say; upon which they were satisfied, and let them go with it; (see ~~Mark~~ Mark 11:4-6). This is a very considerable instance of the faith of the disciples in Christ, and their ready and cheerful obedience to him; who might have objected the appearance of theft, the scandal that might be brought upon them, and the trouble they might be exposed to hereby; but they make no hesitation, but go and do as he had ordered them; and in which, they are worthy of the imitation of all the followers of Jesus.

Ver. 7. *And brought the ass and the colt*, etc.] To Jesus, as Mark and Luke add, and who only make mention of the colt: both were undoubtedly brought; the colt being unloosed and taken away, the ass, its dam, followed after:

and put on them their clothes; their loose upper garments, to be instead of saddles and trappings, and that Christ might sit thereon with ease and decency: the other evangelists say, that they cast their garments on the colt; and the Syriac version here reads, “they put their garments on the colt, and Jesus rode upon it”: but as both were brought, it is clear from hence, that their clothes were put upon both; not knowing which Christ would choose to ride on. And it should seem, that it was not unusual to put garments on asses to ride on; for the Targumist on (~~Judges~~ Judges 5:10) represents the princes of Israel as riding upon asses, strewed or saddled with all kind *yrwyx*, of “painted garments”. The Persic version, without the least colour of authority from the original text, renders it, “and Jesus put his own garment on the colt, and sat thereon”; which is ridiculous, as well as contrary to truth:

and they sat him thereon, or “on them”: meaning either on the ass and colt, that is, on one of them, or both successively, or on the clothes they put upon them.

Ver. 8. *And a very great multitude*, etc.] Which consisted partly of the great multitude which followed Christ from Jericho, and partly of the much people that were come up to the feast of the passover from divers parts, and met him from Jerusalem; (see ^{<612D>}John 12:12,13). These, many of them, for it cannot be thought to be done by them all,

spread their garments in the way; either in the middle of the road, instead of carpets, to ride upon; the Persic version adds, “that he might pass over them”: this they did, in honour to him as a king. So when Jehu declared to the princes of Israel, that he was anointed king of Israel, they hastened, and took every man his garment, and put it under him, (^{<129B>}2 Kings 9:13) that is, to tread upon; though the Jewish writers ^{f1087} say, it was done that he might be higher than them all, suitable to the dignity of a king: and it is reported ^{f1088} of Cato Uticensis, the emperor, that his soldiers strewed their garments for him to walk upon: or these garments were spread by the way side. Dr. Lightfoot conjectures, that little tents might be raised by them along the road, upon which they spread their garments to make a show, in imitation of the feast of tabernacles, to which there is a very great resemblance in many things which occur in this account; when they used to spread linen cloth, garments, and fruits, over their booths, for decoration and ornament; as appears from their traditions about these things:

“*yds hyl [sryp*, “if a man spreads a linen cloth over it”, (his booth,) because of the sun, or under it, because of the falling of leaves, etc. or spreads it over a canopy, it is not right; but he may spread it over the bedposts ^{f1089}.”

That is, for ornament, as the commentators observe ^{f1090}. Again,

“*dgb hyl [çrp*, if a man spreads a garment over it, (his booth,) or if he spreads it under it, because of what falls it is not right; but if he spreads it so as that it is, *htwanl* , “for ornament”, it is right; and so if he covers it according to the tradition of it, and encompasses it with various kinds of fruits, and precious things, and vessels which hang upon it, whether on its walls, or on its covering, so they be for ornament, it is right ^{f1091}.”

In like manner, the multitude might hang their garments, to make the show the greater, either on such booths, or on the houses and trees, that were upon the road, as they went along.

Others cut down branches from the trees; from the olive trees, as the Persic version expresses it, which grew in great plenty hereabout; and also from the palm trees, the branches of which, with the boughs of other trees, were what the Jews used to carry in their hands on the feast of tabernacles; (see ^{<0234>}Leviticus 23:40) and the Evangelist John expressly says, that the people which met Christ from Jerusalem at this time, did take branches of palm trees in their hands, (^{<6123>}John 12:13). And though this was not the time of the feast of tabernacles, but of the passover, yet it was common with the Jews to signify their joy upon any occasion, by such ways and methods they used at that least: so upon the cleansing of the tower of Jerusalem, by Simon Maccabeus, the Jews entered into it with thanksgiving, and branches of palm trees:

“And entered into it the three and twentieth day of the second month in the hundred seventy and first year, with thanksgiving, and branches of palm trees, and with harps, and cymbals, and with viols, and hymns, and songs: because there was destroyed a great enemy out of Israel.” (1 Maccabees 13:51)

Likewise upon purifying the temple, which had been polluted by Antiochus, they kept eight days with gladness as in the feast of tabernacles, and bare branches and fair boughs, and palms also, as in the Apocrypha: 6 And they kept the eight days with gladness, as in the feast of the tabernacles, remembering that not long afore they had held the feast of the tabernacles, when as they wandered in the mountains and dens like beasts. 7 Therefore they bare branches, and fair boughs, and palms also, and sang psalms unto him that had given them good success in cleansing his place. (2 Maccabees 10)

But here it is said,

and they strowed them in the way: not in the middle of the road, which would have been an hindrance to riding; but by the way side, upon, the booths, or houses in the road, in honour of him; just as the Jews ^{f1092} say,

“the streets were strowed with myrtles, and the courts with purple, when Mordecai went out of the king’s gate.”

Ver. 9. *And the multitudes that went before,* etc.] That is, that went before Christ; accordingly the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel, read, "that went before him": these seem to be the much people that met him from Jerusalem,

and that followed him; which were perhaps those that came from Jericho, and other parts;

cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: by calling Jesus the Son of David, they owned and proclaimed him to be the Messiah; this being the usual title by which the Messiah was known among the Jews; see the note on (⁴⁰⁰¹Matthew 1:1) and by crying and saying Hosanna to him, which was done with loud acclamations, and the united shouts of both companies, before and behind; they ascribe all praise, honour, glory, and blessing to him, and wish him all prosperity, happiness, and safety. The word is an Hebrew word, and is compounded of **an**, and **h[çwh**, which signifies, "save I beseech"; and which words stand in (⁴⁹⁸⁵Psalm 118:25) to which the multitude had reference, as appears from what follows; and are formed into one word, **an[çwh**, "Hosana", or "Hosanna", in which form it frequently appears in the Jewish writings; and because of the often use of it at the feast of tabernacles, that feast was called "Hosanna", and the seventh day of it was called **hbr an[çwh**, "the great Hosanna"^{f1093}. Moreover, the "Lulabs", or the bundles made of branches of palm trees, and boughs of willow and myrtle, which they carried in their hands at the feast of tabernacles, often go by this name: it is said^{f1094},

"the Egyptian myrtle is right or fit **an[çwhl**, "for the Hosanna"."

That is, to be put into the "Lulab", or bundle of boughs and branches, which was carried about, and shaken at the above feast. Again^{f1095},

"it is a tradition of R. Meir, that it was the practice of the honourable men of Jerusalem, to bind their "Lulabs" with golden threads says Rabbah, these are they **an[çwh yl dgm**, "that bind the Hosanna": the gloss on it is, "that bind the Lulabs", of the house of the head of the captivity; for in binding the Hosanna of the house of the head of the captivity, they leave in it an hand's breadth and says the same Rabbah, a man may not hold an Hosanna in a linen cloth."

Once more^{f1096},

“says R. Zera, a man may not prepare **an[çwh**, “an Hosanna” for a child, on a good day.”

Sometimes the Hosanna seems to be distinguished from the “Lulab”, and then by the “Lulab” is meant, only the branches of palm tree; and by the Hosanna, the boughs of willow and myrtle; as when ^{f1097},

“Rabbah says, a man may not fix the “Lulab”, **an[çwhb**, “in the Hosanna”.”

And a little after says the same,

“a man may not bind the “Lulab” with the “Hosanna”.”

Now these bundles might be so called, because they were lifted up and shaken, when the above words out of (~~1385~~ Psalm 118:25) were recited: for thus it is said ^{f1098},

“when do they shake, that is, their “Lulabs”, or “Hosannas?” At those words, “O give thanks unto the Lord”, (~~1381~~ Psalm 118:1) the beginning and end; and at those words, “Save now I beseech thee”, (~~1385~~ Psalm 118:25). The house of Hillell, and the house of Shammai say also at those words, “O Lord I beseech thee, send now prosperity”: says R. Akiba, I have observed Rabban Gamaliel and Rabbi Joshua, that all the people shook their Lulabs, but they did not shake, only at those words, Save now I beseech thee, O Lord.”

Hence some have thought, that these are meant by the Hosanna in this text; and that the sense is, that the multitude cried, saying, These branches of palm trees we carry in our hands, and strow by the way side, are in honour to the Son of David, the true Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth: but then this sense will not agree with the following clause, “Hosanna in the highest”: it may therefore be further observed, that certain prayers and songs of praise, were called “Hosannas”: hence we read ^{f1099} of **tbç l ç twn[çwh**, “the Hosannas of the sabbath”; which consisted of various sentences in praise of the sabbath, and thanksgiving to God for it, and are concluded with this word “Hosanna”; and of various petitions that God would save them, as he had done others; and at the end of each petition, is this word. As also of ^{f1100} **hbr an[çwh l ç twn[çwh**, “the Hosannas of the great Hosanna”; which are certain words of prayer and praise, used on the seventh day of the feast of tabernacles: and whereas at that feast the “Hallell”, or hymn,

was sung, which concluded with the 118th Psalm where the words, “Save now I beseech thee, O Lord”, stand, from whence this word is formed; the true sense and meaning of it here appears to be this; that the multitude that attended Christ to Jerusalem, as they went along, sung songs of praise to him, as the true Messiah; particularly, applying the above passage to him, and earnestly wished him all success and prosperity; and importunately prayed for salvation by him; adding,

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: which words are taken also out of (~~13836~~ Psalm 118:26) and is an ascription of blessing and praise to Jesus, the Messiah; who being sent by God, came from him with his authority, as his apostle, and as representing him; and contains another petition for him, that he might be crowned with the blessings of divine goodness, for his people; and be blessed and praised by them, for all the spiritual blessings they are blessed with in him. And very properly and pertinently were those words used and applied to Christ, since the Psalm from whence they are taken belongs to him: the whole of it is, by some Jewish interpreters ^{f1101}, said to be spoken concerning him; and particularly, he is designed in (~~3982~~ Psalm 118:22) by the stone the builders refused, as is clear from (~~4142~~ Matthew 21:42) of this chapter, and from (~~4011~~ Acts 4:11) and (~~4011~~ 1 Peter 2:7) and which is allowed by some Jewish writers, ancient and modern ^{f1102}; and (~~3987~~ Psalm 118:27) the words following these, are by them interpreted of the days of the Messiah, the times of Gog and Magog, and the future age ^{f1103}. And others of them said, as Mark observes, (~~4110~~ Mark 11:10). “Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord”; (See Gill on “~~4110~~ Mark 11:10”). Moreover, as it may be thought others of the people said, as Luke relates, (~~4138~~ Luke 19:38).

Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord; (See Gill on “~~4138~~ Luke 19:38”). To which is added,

Hosanna in the highest; that is, let songs of praise be sung to God, who is in the highest heavens, for all his grace and goodness vouchsafed to the sons of men, through Christ his beloved Son; or let not only all salvation, happiness, and prosperity attend the Messiah, David’s son, here on earth, but all glory and felicity in the highest heavens, above which he will be exalted.

Ver. 10. *And when he was come into Jerusalem.* etc.] The metropolis of the nation, the seat of the ancient kings of Judah, and of his father David,

entering into it in this very public manner; as he never did before; riding in the manner the ancient judges and kings of Israel did, attended with a numerous retinue, shouting as they went along, and singing their “Hosannas” to him:

all the city was moved; as Bethlehem was, when Naomi with Ruth returned thither; and of which the same phrase is used, as here, (^(R19)Ruth 1:19).

all the city was moved about them; which the Chaldee paraphrase renders, “all the inhabitants of the city were gathered in troops about them.”

And so here the sense is, that the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem were in general alarmed at the uncommon apparatus, and shouting, and ran in great numbers to inquire what was the matter:

saying, who is this? They knew him not; for though he had preached unto them, and wrought miracles among them, yet they had never seen him in any such pomp and state; and could not devise who he should be, that entered their city in such a manner, amidst the shouts and acclamations of so great a multitude: it seemed greatly to affect them, and fill them with concern, astonishment, and fear.

Ver. 11. *And the multitude said*, etc.] Or the people, as the Vulgate Latin, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel read; the common people, that went before, and followed after him: these knew Christ better than the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Scribes and Pharisees, and rulers of the people.

This is Jesus the prophet: that prophet Moses spoke of, in (^(R15)Deuteronomy 18:15) and the nation of the Jews in general expected:

of Nazareth of Galilee; who, though he was not born there, yet being educated, and having lived much in that place, is said to be of it; and which was the common opinion of the people.

Ver. 12. *And Jesus went into the temple of God*, etc.] At Jerusalem, which was built by his order, and dedicated to his worship, and where the Shechaniah, or the divine presence was. Christ went not to the tower of David, the strong hold of Zion, the palace of his father David; for he entered not as a temporal king; but he went to the house of his heavenly Father, as the lord and proprietor of it, to preach in it, and purge it; whereby the glory of the latter house became greater than that of the former; and so several prophecies had their accomplishment, particularly

(^{<3017>}Haggai 2:7,9 ^{<3018>}Malachi 3:1) though this was not the first time by many, of Christ's being in the temple; yet this his entrance was the most public and magnificent of any: after, he had alighted from the colt, and sent back that and the ass to their proper owners, as is very probable, he went by the eastern gate, called the king's gate, (^{<3018>}1 Chronicles 9:18) into the temple;

and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple: not in the holy of holies, nor in the holy place, nor in the court of the priests, nor in the court of the Israelites, but in the court of the Gentiles, and in the mountain of the house, in which were shops, where various things were sold, relating to sacrifices. What these persons bought and sold, whom Christ cast out, is not said, but may be collected from (^{<3014>}John 2:14) where besides "doves", of which hereafter, mention is made, of "sheep" and "oxen"; which were brought to be sold, on account of the passover, for it was then near their time of passover as now; for besides the lambs and kids, which were here also sold and bought for the passover supper, sheep and oxen were here also killed and sold for the Chagiga, or feast ^{f1104}, which was the day following: here likewise the drink offerings were bought and sold, of which take the following account.

"There were fifteen presidents çdqmb, "in the sanctuary":

Jochanan ben Phinehas was over the tickets, and Ahijah over the drink offerings, etc. — He that inquired for drink offerings, went to Jochanan, who was appointed over the tickets: he gave him the money, and took a ticket; he then went to Ahijah, that was appointed over the drink offerings, and gave him the ticket, and received from him the drink offerings; and in the evening they came together, and Ahijah produced the tickets, and took for them the money ^{f1105}."

This was one way of buying and selling in the temple;

and overthrew the tables of the money changers; of which sort were they, who sat in the temple at certain times, to receive the half shekel, and change the money of such, who wanted one, by which they gained something, to themselves. It was a custom in our Lord's time, for every Israelite, once a year, to pay half a shekel towards the temple charge and service, which was founded upon the orders given by God to Moses in the wilderness; that upon his numbering the people, to take of everyone that was twenty years of age and upwards, rich or poor, half a shekel,

(⁴²³¹³Exodus 30:13-15) though this does not seem to be designed as a perpetual rule. However, it now obtained, and was annually paid:

“On the first day of Adar (which answers to our February) they proclaimed concerning the shekels ^{f1106}.”

That is, they gave public notice, in all the cities in Israel, that the time of paying the half shekel was near at hand, that they might get their money ready, for everyone was obliged to pay it: the Jews ^{f1107} say,

“it is an affirmative command of the law, that every man in Israel should pay the half shekel every year; even though a poor man that is maintained by alms, he is obliged to it, and must beg it of others, or sell his coat upon his back and pay it, as it is said, (⁴²³¹⁵Exodus 30:15). The rich shall not give more, etc. — All are bound to give it, priests, Levites, and Israelites, and strangers, and servants, that are made free; but not women, nor servants, nor children.”

Notice being thus given ^{f1108},

“on the fifteenth day (of the same month), **twnj l wç**, “tables” were placed in the province, or city (which Bartenora ^{f1109} interprets of Jerusalem; but Maimonides ^{f1110} says, the word used is the name of all the cities in the land of Israel, excepting Jerusalem), and on the twenty fifth they sit, **çdqmb**, “in the sanctuary”.”

The same is related by Maimonides ^{f1111}, after this manner:

“On the first of Adar they proclaim concerning the shekels, that every man may prepare his half shekel, and be ready to give it on the fifteenth; **µynj l wçh**, “the exchangers” sit in every province or city, and mildly ask it; everyone that gives them it, they take it of them; and he that does not give, they do not compel him to give: on the twenty fifth, they sit in the sanctuary to collect it; and henceforward they urge him that does not give, until he gives; and everyone that does not give, they oblige him to give pledge, and they, take his pledge, whether he will or not, and even his coat.”

This gives us a plain account of these money changers; of their tables, and of their sitting at them in the temple, and on what account. Now these exchangers had a profit in every shekel they changed ^{f1112}.

“When a man went to an exchanger, and changed a shekel for two half shekels, he gave him an addition to the shekel; and the addition is called $\hat{w}bl\ q$, “Kolbon”; wherefore, when two men gave a shekel for them both, they were both obliged to pay the “Kolbon”.”

Would you know what this “Kolbon”, whence these exchangers are called, $\kappa\omicron\lambda\lambda\upsilon\beta\iota\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$, “Collybistae”, in this text, or the gain which these men had, take this question and answer in their own words ^{f1113}.

“How much is the “Kolbon?” A silver “meah”, according to. R. Meir; but the wise men say, half an one.”

Or as it is elsewhere expressed ^{f1114},

“what is the value of the “Kolbon?” At that time they gave two pence for the half shekel, the “Kolbon” was half a “meah”, which is the twelfth part of a penny; and since, “Kolbon” less than that is not given.”

Now a “meah” was the half of a sixth part of the half shekel, and the twenty fourth part of a shekel, and weighed sixteen barley corns: half a “meah” was the forty eighth part of a shekel, and weighed eight barley ^{f1115} corns; a “meah” was, of our money, the value of somewhat more than a penny, and half an one more than a halfpenny. This was their gain, which in so large a number that paid, must amount to a great deal of money. There seems to be nothing lie against these men being the very persons, whose tables Christ overturned, unless it should be objected, that this was not the time of their sitting; for it was now within a few days of the passover, which was in the month Nisan; whereas it was in the month Adar, that the half shekel was paid: but it should be observed, according to the above account, that they did not begin to sit in the temple to receive this money, until the twenty fifth of Adar; and it was now but the tenth of Nisan, when Christ entered the temple and found them there: so that there was but fifteen days: between the one and the other; and considering the large numbers that were obliged to pay, and the backwardness and poverty of many, they may reasonably be thought to be still sitting on that account: and what Maimonides before relates deserves notice, and will strengthen this supposition; that on the twenty fifth: of Adar, they sat in the temple to collect this money; and that henceforward they urged and compelled persons to pay it. Moreover, these men had other business, in a way of exchange, than this to do; and especially at such a time as the passover,

when persons came from different parts to attend it; and who, might want to have their foreign money changed for current coin; or bills of return, to be changed for money: add to all this the following account, which will show the large and perpetual business of these men ^{f1116}.

“In the sanctuary there were before them, *dymt*, “continually”, or “daily”, thirteen chests (and there were as many tables ^{f1117}); every chest was in the form of a trumpet: the first was for the shekels of the present year, the second for the shekels of the year past; the third for everyone that had a “Korban”, or vow upon him to offer two turtledoves, or two young pigeons; the one a burnt offering, the other a sin offering: their price was, cast into this chest: the fourth for everyone that had the burnt offering of a fowl only on him, the price of that was cast into this chest. The fifth was for him, who freely gave money to buy wood, to be laid in order on the altar; the sixth, for him that freely gave money for the incense; the seventh, for him that freely gave gold for the mercy seat; the eighth, for the remainder of the sin offering; as when he separated the money for his sin offering, and took the sin offering, and there remained of the money, the rest he cast into this chest; the ninth, for the remainder of the trespass offering; the tenth, for the remainder of the doves for men and women in fluxes, and women after childbirth; the eleventh, for the remainder of the offerings of the Nazarite; the twelfth, for the remainder of the trespass offering of the leper: the thirteenth, for him that freely gave money for the burnt offering of a beast.”

And the seats of them that sold doves, which were the offerings of the poor sort after child bearing, and on account of running issues: which cases were very frequent, and sometimes raised the price of doves very high, of which what follows is an instance ^{f1118}.

“It happened at a certain time, that doves were sold in Jerusalem for a golden penny each; said Rabban ben Simeon Gamaliel, by this habitation (or temple which he swore by) I will not lodge (or lie down) this night, until they are sold for a silver penny each: he went into the council house and taught, that if a woman had five certain births, or five certain issues, she should bring one offering, and eat of the sacrifices, nor should there remain any debt upon her; and doves were sold that day for two fourths.”

That is, for a silver penny; now a golden penny was the value of twenty five silver pence ^{f1119}; so that the price, by this means, was sunk very much: but not only doves were sold in the markets in Jerusalem, but in the temple itself ^{f1120}.

“There was a president over the doves, which was he with whom they agreed, who sold doves for the offerings, so and so by the shekel; and everyone that was obliged to bring a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons, brought the price of them, **çdqml**, “to the sanctuary”; and the president gave the doves to the masters of the offerings, and made up the account with the treasurers.”

Now at a feast time as this was, there was a greater demand for doves than usual; for women who had lain in, and such as had fluxes, whether men or women, who lived in distant parts, reserved their offerings till they came up to the feast ^{f1121}; and which in consequence must occasion a greater call for these creatures, and furnishes out a reason, why there should be so many sitting at this time in the temple to sell doves. Some have thought, that those persons are here meant, which are often mentioned by the Jewish doctors ^{f1122}, as an infamous sort of men, who are not admitted as witnesses in any case; and are reckoned among thieves, robbers, usurers, and players at dice; who **μυνω yj yrpm**, “teach doves to fly”, either to decoy other doves from their dove houses, or to out fly others for money, or to fight one against another; and these sat in the temple to sell this sort of doves, which was still more heinous; but the other sense is more agreeable.

Ver. 13. *And said unto them, it is written*, etc.] In (⁻²⁸⁰⁷ Isaiah 56:7).

My house shall be called the house of prayer. These are the words of God, calling the temple his house, which was built according to the plan he gave; and was the place of his worship, and where he dwelt, and vouchsafed his presence to his people; and signifying, that in time to come, it should be an house of prayer; not for the Jews only, but for the Gentiles also: “for all people”, as it is expressed by the prophet, and cited by Mark; and particularly this part of it, in which were the money changers and sellers of doves; for that was the court of the Gentiles, where they were admitted to pray, and perform other parts of worship. These words are rightly applied by Christ to the temple; nor can the Jews themselves deny it; for their own Targum paraphrases it thus, **yçdqm tyb**, “the house of my sanctuary shall be called an house of prayer”; or shall be one; for the

meaning is not that it should go by such a name, but should be for such use, and not for buying and selling, and merchandise, to which use the Jews now put it: hence it follows,

but ye have made it a den of thieves. These are the words of Christ, affirming what is complained of in (^{<2471>}Jeremiah 7:11) and applying it to the present case, on account of the wicked merchandise, unlawful gain, avarice and extortion, of the priests and other officers of the temple, who had a considerable share in these things; and to whom the temple was, and by them used, as a den is to and by thieves and robbers, where they shelter themselves; for these persons robbed both God and man, and the temple was a sanctuary to them: here they screened themselves, and, under the appearance of religion and devotion, devoured widows' houses, plundered persons of their substance, and were full of extortion and excess.

Ver. 14. *And the blind and the lame came to him,* etc.] The Syriac and Ethiopic versions read, "they brought unto him the blind and the lame". The blind could not come to him unless they were led, nor the lame, unless they were carried: the sense therefore is, they came, being brought to him:

in the temple; that part of it, the court of the Gentiles, and mountain of the house, out of which he had cast the buyers and sellers, etc. and in the room of them, were brought in these objects of his pity:

and he healed them; to the blind he restored sight, and caused the lame to walk; which miracles he wrought in confirmation of the doctrine he preached: for all the other evangelists relate, that he taught in the temple.

Ver. 15. *And when the chief priests and Scribes,* etc.] The inveterate enemies of Christ; who upon hearing the shouts of the people at Christ's entrance into the city, and passage through it to the temple; and understanding that it was Jesus of Nazareth that was come thither, they came also to awe the people, and pick up what they could against him: who, when they

saw the wonderful things that he did; as the overturning the tables of the money changers, and the seats of those that sold doves, without any opposition, when these traders were so many, and in great power, and he a single person, and unarmed; and that the blind received their sight, and the lame were cured,

and the children crying in the temple; who came from the various parts of the city, with their parents, to see the sight; who, when the multitude had done, they began the same ditty:

and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; proclaiming Jesus to be the Messiah, and ascribing praise and glory to him, and wishing him all happiness and prosperity: the form they had taken up from the people, and might be encouraged by their parents; and which they pronounced without fear of the high priests, and Scribes, being disposed, directed, and overruled hereunto by the providence of God. It was indeed no unusual thing for children to sing the “Hosanna” at the feast of tabernacles; for, according to the Jewish canons ^{f1123},

“a child that knew how to shake, was obliged to carry the “Lulab,””

or bundle of myrtle, and willow boughs, and palm tree branches, at the shaking of which “Hosanna” was said: but that they should cry “Hosanna” to Jesus, as David’s son was very extraordinary, and what the high priests, and Scribes, took notice of with great resentment:

they were sore displeased; at the children, that so said, at their parents that suffered them, and especially at Christ, who did not forbid them. The Persic version renders it, “it displeased the priests”; the Arabic reads, “they murmured”; and the Ethiopic has it, “it was not pleasant to them”.

Ver. 16. *And said unto him, hearest thou what these say?* etc.] Suggesting, that if he did, he ought to reprove them, or else he would be a very vain, as well as a weak man, to take such things to himself, which did not belong to him, and that from such poor, little, silly creatures, so void of knowledge and understanding:

and Jesus said unto them, yea: signifying he did hear, and well approved of what they said, and was ready to vindicate it; and did, by putting the following question to them,

have ye never read; that passage of Scripture in (^{<1918>}Psalm 8:2)

out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? in the original text it is, “thou hast ordained”, or “founded strength”; and which is rendered by the Septuagint, as it is by Matthew here; and glory and strength are mentioned together, as being to be given to God, (^{<1921>}Psalm 29:1) and so “strength” and “praise” by the Targumist in (^{<2137>}Isaiah 13:3)

by which is meant strong glory, or glory and praise expressed with a strong voice, or in a very vehement manner, as it was by these babes and sucklings; and this owing to God's disposing them hereunto, putting it into their mouths, and strengthening them to declare it in a very strong and powerful manner; so that his strength was made perfect in their weakness, and his praise the more glorious. In the Psalm it is added, "because of thine enemies, that thou might still the enemy, and the avenger": by whom are meant the high priests, the Scribes and Pharisees, the mortal enemies of Christ, who were full of enmity against him, and wanted to revenge themselves on him for spoiling their market at this time; but were stilled by the "Hosannas" of the children, and Christ's defence of them. The Jews themselves seem to be conscious, that these words relate to the Messiah; for they say ^{f1124}, that

"babes and sucklings, *apqwt ʿybhy*, shall give strength to the king Messiah"

manifestly referring to this passage.

Ver. 17. *And he left them*, etc.] The high priests and Scribes, confounded and put to silence, and as unworthy of his company and conversation;

and went out of the city; of Jerusalem, partly to prevent being apprehended by his enemies before his time, and partly to remove all suspicion of seizing the city and government, and setting himself up as a temporal prince;

to Bethany; which was about fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem, or almost two miles, (^{<4118>}John 11:18). Hither he went to converse with his dear friends, Lazarus, and Martha, and Mary, who were all of this place, and where he could lodge and rest quietly. The name of the town is variously interpreted: according to some ancient writers ^{f1125}, it signifies "the house of obedience"; so Christ went from the disobedient and faithless city, to a place of obedience, where he had some faithful and obedient disciples: others read it, and so Munster's Hebrew Gospel, *hyn[tyb*, "the house of affliction"; a suitable place for Christ to go to, who was about to suffer for the sins of his people. The Syriac version renders it *ayn[tyb*, and which is interpreted "an house", or "place of business", as this town of Bethany was. We read ^{f1126} of *wnyh tyb l ʿ twywnj*, "the shops of Bethany", which were destroyed three years before Jerusalem, because they made their affairs to stand upon the words of the law; that is, as the gloss explains it,

they found that what was forbidden by the wise men, was free by the law: a great trade might be drove here for olives, dates, and figs, which grew hereabout in great plenty: mention is made in the Talmud of ^{f1127} *ynyh tyb ygp*, “the figs of Bethany”: hence, as Christ departed from this place, the next morning he saw a fig tree. But the true etymology and signification of the name is *ynyha tyb* “the house”, or “place of dates”, the fruit of the palm tree: hence they that came from Jerusalem to meet Christ, might have their palm tree branches. One part of Mount Olivet abounded with olives, from whence it had its name; another part bore palm trees, and that was called “Bethany”, from whence this town over against it had its name; and another part had great plenty of fig trees growing on it, and this called “Bethphage”; and that part of Jerusalem which was nearest to it went by the same name. We read ^{f1128} also of *ynyh tyb l ç Jrm*, “the washing place of Bethany”; which seems to me to be not a place for the washing and purification of unclean men and women, as Dr. Lightfoot thinks, but for washing of sheep; for the story is, that

“a fox tore a sheep in pieces at the washing place of Bethany, and the affair came before the wise men;”

that is, at Jerusalem, to know whether that sheep might be eaten or no, since that which was torn was forbidden. And some have interpreted “Bethany, an house”, or “place of sheep”: but so much for this town, and what account is given of it.

And he lodged there; either in the house of Lazarus, and his two sisters, or in that of Simon the leper; for it was eventide when he went out of Jerusalem, as Mark observes. The Ethiopic version adds, “and rested there”; and so Origen ^{f1129} reads it; and, according to Harpocratian ^{f1130}, the word used by the evangelist signifies to lie down, and sleep, and take one’s rest. Christ lodged here all night.

Ver. 18. *Now in the morning*, etc.] Greek “in the first”, or morning light, in the dawn, or break of day, the first spring of light; so the Latins ^{f1131} use “prima luce” for early in the morning, as soon as ever day breaks: so early did Christ rise, and return from Bethany to Jerusalem;

and as he returned to the city. The Persic version renders it, “they returned”; which, though not a good version, gives a true sense; for, as Christ went with the twelve to Bethany, as Mark affirms, so these returned

with him, as is clear from what follows. Thus Christ, day after day, went to and from Jerusalem: in the evening he went to Bethany, or to some part of the Mount of Olives, and there abode all night, and returned in the daytime to Jerusalem, and taught in the temple; for it does not appear that he was one night in Jerusalem, before the night of the passover.

He hungered, rising so early before his friends were up, he had eaten nothing that morning, and so before he had got far from Bethany, found himself hungry; which proves the truth of his human nature, which was in all respects like to ours, excepting sin.

Ver. 19. *And when he saw a fig tree*, etc.] In the Greek text it is “one fig tree”, one remarkable fig tree: he must see a great many, as he went along; for a large tract of the Mount Of Olives was full of fig trees, and therefore called “Bethphage”: and notice has been taken already of the figs of Bethany: but he saw none that had such large and spreading leaves as this; for it was the time when the fig tree was just budding, and putting forth its leaves: wherefore he took notice of it; and though it was “afar off”, as Mark says, yet being hungry, he made up to it, expecting, from its promising appearance, to find fruit on it. This fig tree was “in the way”; by the road side, and probably had no owner; was common to anybody, and so no injury was done to any person by losing it: he came to it,

and found nothing thereon but leaves only: Mark says, “he came, if haply he might find anything thereon”; which must be understood of him as man; for as he hungered as man, so he judged and expected as man, from the appearance of this fig tree, that he might find fruit upon it; and which is no contradiction to his deity, and his having the Spirit of God, as the Jew^{f1132} objects; and especially since, as Bishop Kidder^{f1133} observes, such an expectation is attributed to God himself, in (~~2RD~~ Isaiah 5:2,4) and it may be added, and with regard to that people, of which this fig tree was an emblem, and designed by Christ to be considered as such in what he did to it. The same evangelist further observes, “and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for the time of figs was not yet”. The word “yet” is not in the original text; which last clause is a reason, either why he found no fruit, or nothing but leaves upon it, because it was not a time, or season of figs: it was not a good fig year, so Dr. Hammond interprets it; and yet though it was not, since this tree was so very flourishing, fruit might have been expected on it: and also, it furnishes out a reason why Christ took so much pains to go to it, seeing there were very few figs to be had elsewhere,

and this bid very fair to supply him with some in this time of scarcity: or else, as a reason why, besides its promising appearance, he expected fruit upon it, because the time of figs, that is, of the gathering of the figs, was not come: in which sense the phrase is used in (^{4213b} Matthew 21:34); and is Bishop Kidder's interpretation of the passage: and since therefore the time was not come for the ingathering of the figs, none had been taken off of it, the more might be expected on it. This sense would be very probable, did it appear that figs were usually ripe about this time; but the contrary seems manifest, both from Scripture, which represents the fig tree putting forth its leaves, as a sign the summer is nigh, (⁴²⁴² Matthew 24:32) and from the Talmudists, who say ^{f1134}, that the beginning of leaves, or putting forth of the leaves of trees, is in the month Nisan, the month in which the passover was kept, and so the then present time of the year; and who, from this time, reckon three times fifty days, or five full months before the figs are ripe ^{f1135}: so that these words are rather a reason why Christ did not expect to find figs on other trees, which he saw in great abundance as he passed along, because the time of common, ordinary figs being ripe, was not come; and why he particularly expected to find some on this tree, because it being full of leaves, appeared to be of a different kind from other fig trees: and was either of that sort which they call *j wç twnb*, "Benoth Shuach", as Dr. Lightfoot conjectures which were a kind of white figs that were not ripe till the third year ^{f1136}. This tree put forth its fruit the first year, which hung on it the second, and were brought to perfection on the third: so that when it was three years old, it had fruit of the first, second, and third year on it: this being such a tree, by its being full of leaves, when others had none, or were just putting out, fruit, of one year, or more might have been expected on it, when it had none at all, and therefore was cursed: or it might be one of that sort which brought forth fruit twice a year; for of such sort of fig trees we read in the Jewish writings ^{f1137}: and therefore though it was not the time of the common figs being ripe, yet this being one of the seasons, in which this tree bore ripe fruit, and being so very flourishing, might reasonably be expected from it: but there being none,

he said unto it, let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever; or, as it is expressed in Mark, "no man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever": for if none grew on it henceforward, no man could hereafter eat of it. Both expressions design the same thing, the perpetual barrenness of the fig tree:

and presently the fig tree withered away: immediately, upon Christ's saying these words, its sap was dried up, it lost its verdure; its leaves were shrivelled and shrunk up, and dropped off, and the whole was blasted. This tree was an emblem of the Jews: Christ being hungry, and very desirous of the salvation of men, came first to them, from whom, on account of their large profession of religion, and great pretensions to holiness, and the many advantages they enjoyed, humanly speaking, much fruit of righteousness might have been expected; but, alas! he found nothing but mere words, empty boasts, an outward show of religion, an external profession, and a bare performance of trifling ceremonies, and oral traditions; wherefore Christ rejected them, and in a little time after, the kingdom of God, the Gospel, was taken away from them, and their temple, city, and nation, entirely destroyed.

Ver. 20. *And when the disciples saw it*, etc.] The next day in the morning, as Mark says: they had, heard what Christ had said to it the day before, as the same evangelist observes; but did not take notice of the immediate withering of the tree; but the next morning, as they returned from Bethany, they saw it dried up from the roots:

they marvelled; not that Christ should curse it, but that it should wither away so soon, and upon his saying what he did; which was a considerable instance of his power and Godhead, all creatures, animate and inanimate, being at his command and disposal:

saying, how soon is the fig tree withered away? This was said by Peter, in the name of the rest, who recollecting what Jesus had said to it the day before, and observing how the event had answered his words so soon, addressed Christ after this manner: "master, behold the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away"; expressing his wonder at it, and ascribing, it to the power of Christ; of which this was an amazing proof and evidence.

Ver. 21. *Jesus answered and said unto them*, etc.] His disciples wondering at his power, in causing the fig tree to wither so suddenly:

verily I say unto you, if ye have faith; that is, in God, in his power, which reaches to all things: the object of faith is expressed in Mark, and by way of exhortation, "have faith in God", that he will enable you to perform whatsoever ye shall desire; which must be understood, not of spiritual faith in the promises of God, and person of Christ, but of, the faith of miracles,

or faith in the power of God to perform things that are above the strength of nature:

and doubt not; either of the power, or will of God to do for you, and by you, the thing desired; for this kind of faith would not admit of the least degree of doubting: there must be no hesitation in the mind, no reasoning upon the thing, how it can be performed; the mind must not be divided between the power and will of God, and the difficulties and discouragements which attend the case, but must believe in hope against hope, with a full persuasion of accomplishment: for want of this faith, without doubting, the disciples could not cure the child that was lunatic.

Ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree; cause one to be dried up, and wither away by a word, as Christ had done to this, which, comparatively speaking, was but a lesser sort of miracle;

but also, if ye shall say to this mountain; the Mount of Olives, where Christ and his disciples now were, and were passing over, or, at least, were very near it; or any other mountain wherever they might be, to which they should, upon any occasion, think fit to say,

be thou removed, and cast into the sea; which was many miles off from Mount Olivet, and must be a very surprising performance for a mountain to be rooted up, so large as that was, and be carried several miles from its former situation, and be thrown into the sea; and yet, as difficult and amazing as this may seem,

it shall be done: that is, provided the person doubts not; or, as it is said in Mark, “shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things, which he saith, shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith”: for this must not be confined to the particular instances of drying up a fig tree, or removing a mountain, but the doing of any sort of miracle, how great soever. Nor is it our Lord’s meaning that they should do these particular things; nor is it certain that they ever did: but his sense is, that, had they faith, they should be able not only to do such lesser miracles, as, comparatively speaking, the withering of the fig tree was, but they should be able to perform things much more difficult and surprising, whenever the good of the souls of men, the propagation of the Gospel, and the glory of God required them.

Ver. 22. *And all things whatsoever*, etc.] Not only miracles, but any other thing which may be for the honour of God, the interest of religion, the

spreading of the Gospel, the enlargement of the kingdom, of Christ, their own spiritual good, and the welfare of immortal souls,

ye shall ask in prayer, believing. Munster's Hebrew Gospel reads it, "in prayer, and in faith"; and the Arabic version renders it, "in prayer with faith"; both to the same purpose, and aptly express the sense of the words, which design the prayer of faith; or that prayer which is put up in the strength of faith; and is of great avail with God: for whatever is asked in faith, agreeable to the will of God, which is contained in his covenant, word, and promises, and makes for his glory, and the good of his people, shall be given, be it what it will; though to carnal sense and reason it may seem impracticable and impossible:

ye shall receive; of God, through Christ, freely and fully, and shall have and enjoy them, either they themselves, if asked for themselves, or others, for whom they are asked.

Ver. 23. *And when he was come into the temple,* etc.] The day following the cursing the fig tree: for the withering of it, and the notice the disciples took of it, and our Lord's discourse with them about it, were not in one and the same day, as is clear from the account the Evangelist Mark gives; but on the morning that Christ had conversed with his apostles by the way from Bethany to Jerusalem, concerning the strength of faith in prayer, and the success of it; when they were come into the city, and to the temple, whither he directly went, and entered upon his work of preaching to the people,

the chief priests and elders of the people came unto him. The "chief priests" were not the high priest, and his "sagan", or deputy, but the principal of the priesthood, who were chosen from the rest of their brethren, to sit in the sanhedrim; and "the elders of the people" were the laity that were chosen from among the people, to be members of the same grand council: in this sense the Jewish writers interpret the word "elders", in (^(RXX)Deuteronomy 21:2) "thy elders, and thy judges"; that is,

"thy elders, who are thy judges: it is a tradition, R. Eliezer ben Jacob says, *l wdgh `yd tyb hz:Æynqz*, "thine eiders; this is the great sanhedrim"^{f1138}."

The other Evangelists Mark and Luke add to these, Scribes, who also were a part of this great assembly; so that the principal members of it, if not the

whole sanhedrim, came in a body together, if possible, by their presence and authority, to daunt Christ, discourage his ministry, bring it into contempt with the people, and stop his proceedings and success. And this they did

as he was teaching; the people, that is, preaching the Gospel to them, as Luke explains it: he was instructing them in the things relating to himself, and his kingdom, dispensing the mysteries of his grace, the doctrines of regeneration, justification, and salvation. Mark says, it was “as he was walking in the temple”: and at the same time teaching the people, who flocked about him in like manner, as the Peripatetic philosophers taught their scholars walking: whence they had their name.

And said, by what authority dost thou these things? that is, drive out the buyers and sellers out of the temple, which greatly provoked them, their own gain and interest being concerned therein; and perform these miracles of restoring sight to the blind, and causing the lame to walk; which he had very lately wrought in the temple; and particularly preach these doctrines, the work in which he was then engaged:

and who gave thee this authority? They do not object to his doctrines, or dispute whether they were true or false; nor examine his miracles, whether they were of God, or of the devil: in these points they might fear he would be able to put them to silence and confusion, of which some of them had had an experience before; but they proceed in another way, in which they might hope for success, and attack him about his commission and authority under which he acted, whether he pretended to derive his authority from God, or from men: by this they designed to ensnare him and hoped they should gain their point, let him answer in what form he would. Should he say that God gave him the authority to do these things, they would charge him with enthusiasm and blasphemy, urging, that it was wickedness and presumption any man to pretend to be sent immediately from God; since the order of the priesthood, and of teaching was fixed, and none were to take upon them the office of a priest, or of a teacher of the people, but by their appointment; or none were called and sent, but through them, or by their means: and if he should say, that he had his authority from men, they would confront him, and absolutely deny that he had any from them, who only had the power of giving men an authority of preaching in the temple; wherefore he must be an usurper of this office, and a turbulent, seditious person, that sought to destroy all order, civil and ecclesiastical.

Ver. 24. *And Jesus answered and said unto them,* etc.] Not by replying directly to their question, but by putting another question to them, whereby he escaped the snare he saw they laid for him:

I also will ask you one thing, word, or question,

which if ye tell me; honestly, and plainly answer to it,

I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: which was putting the thing upon such a foot, and in such a form, as they could not well object to; for Christ promises, that if they would return a plain answer to the question he had to put to them, and which was no unreasonable, nor impertinent one, he would thoroughly satisfy them in this point; and expressly declare his commission and authority, what it was, and from whence he had it. The question is as follows:

Ver. 25. *The baptism of John, whence was it?* etc.] By the baptism of John, is meant the ordinance of water baptism, which was first administered by him; from whence he took the name of John the Baptist: and the doctrine which he preached concerning it, and previous to it, and even the whole of his ministry; which is denominated from a principal part of it, and which greatly distinguished his ministry from all others: and the question put by Christ concerning it is, whence it was? by what authority did John administer the ordinance of water baptism, which had never been administered before by any? who sent him to preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, a doctrine the world had never heard of before? who gave him a commission to discharge the several parts of his ministry, which he performed in such a wonderful and powerful manner? did he receive his authority

from heaven, or of men? that is, from God or man? as the opposition requires; and as it was usual for the Jews to call God by the name of “heaven”: in this sense it is used by them, when they say ^{f1139}, that such have no part in the world to come, who affirm, that the law is not $\mu\upsilon\mu\varsigma\eta$ \hat{m} , “from heaven”, that is, from God; which is exactly the phrase here: and when they observe ^{f1140}, that care should be taken that a man does not pronounce $\mu\upsilon\mu\varsigma\eta$ $\mu\varsigma$, “the name of heaven”, that is, God, in vain: and when they tell ^{f1141} us of a certain man that built large buildings by the way side, and put food and drink there, so that everyone that came went in and eat, and drank, $\mu\upsilon\mu\varsigma\eta$ $\text{\AA}r\text{bw}$, “and blessed heaven”; that is blessed, or

gave thanks to God; and when they speak of ^{f1142} *ܡܘܡܥܠ ܗܬܝܡ*, “death by heaven”; that is, death which is immediately inflicted by God. So when Christ here asks, whether John’s baptism was from heaven, or of men, his meaning is, whether it was of divine institution, and that John acted by divine authority, and commission; or whether it was an human device of his own, or of other men, and that he took the office of preaching and baptizing upon himself of his own head, or by some human appointment: to this he requires a direct answer, as is said in Mark, “answer me”; whether it was from the one, or from the other;

and they reasoned with themselves; either “within themselves”, as the Arabic version renders it, “in their own minds”, as the Syriac; or they took some little time and privately conferred together, what answer they should return; when they argued the point among themselves,

saying, if we shall say from heaven; if we shall return for answer, that the baptism and ministry of John were of divine appointment, and that he acted by a divine authority,

he will say unto us, why did ye not believe him? why did not ye believe the doctrine that he preached? and receive the testimony that he gave concerning the Messiah? and why were ye not baptized by him? why did ye reject the counsel of God against yourselves? They saw plainly, that if they owned the divine authority of John’s baptism and ministry, they must allow Jesus to be the true Messiah, John bore witness to; and consequently, that it was by a divine authority he did what he did; and then there was an end of the question, and is the very thing that Christ had in view.

Ver. 26. *But if we shall say of men*, etc.] They reasoned with themselves, that should they give their answer in this form, and say, that the ministry and baptism of John, were merely human, and what he took up of himself, or which he performed by an authority derived from men,

we fear the people; that were then upon the spot, in the temple; who, as many of them were now the followers of Christ, more of them had been the admirers of John, and probably had been baptized by him: wherefore the sanhedrim were afraid of them, lest if they should affirm, that the authority by which John acted was human, they would immediately rise up against them; and, as Luke says, “stone” them: so high a veneration had they for him, and so dear was his memory still unto them.

For all held John as a prophet. These are the words of the high priests and elders, and not of the evangelist, expressing the reason of their fears from the people, who, in general, were thoroughly persuaded, as Luke expresses it, and firmly believed that John was a prophet, that was raised up, and sent immediately by God; and did not derive his authority and commission to preach and baptize from any man, or set of men, whatever.

Ver. 27. *And they answered Jesus and said, we cannot tell,* etc.] They saw the dilemma they were brought into; they chose rather therefore to speak against their own consciences, and tell a wilful lie, and incur the reproach of ignorance: who, at other times, took upon them to judge of a prophet, whether he was a true or a false one, and by what authority he acted, whether of God, or man: but now being reduced to this wretched condition, contrary to their office and character, declare they did not know, and could not tell from whence John had his commission, and who gave him his authority:

and he said unto them, neither tell I you by what authority I do these things: since, according to the proposal of Christ, and the agreement he entered into with them, they did not give him a direct answer to his question, he looked upon himself under no obligation to inform them, what was his authority, and from whence he had it; though by the question he put to them he tacitly suggests, that he had his authority not from man, but from God; and by this his answer signifies, that since John preached and baptized without their authority and approbation, so might he; nor was he dependent on them, or accountable to them.

Ver. 28. *But what think you?* etc.] (See Gill on “~~4082~~ Matthew 18:12”)

a certain man had two sons. This is a parable; the design of which is to show the hypocrisy and deceit of the Scribes and Pharisees, in pretending to works of righteousness, and not doing them; and to reprove them for their disbelief and rejection of John’s ministry; and to make it appear, that the worst of sinners in the Jewish nation were preferable to them; and that many of them were, and would be, happy, when they would be miserable. By the “certain man”, in the parable, God is designed; who, though he is not a man, nor to be represented by any human form; yet, as man is the image of God, he is therefore, in an improper and figurative sense, compared to man, and set forth by him; which may be allowed in a metaphorical and parabolical way: and though the Son of God only assumed human nature, and really became man; yet God, the Father, seems

rather to be here intended, who is sometimes compared to a husbandman and a vinedresser; (see ~~<BIB>~~ John 15:1,2) and as appears from the relation of the “two sons” unto him; by whom are meant not Jews and Gentiles; for the latter can never be intended by the first son; for these were not sons in such sense as the Jews were, nor were upon an equal foot of sonship with them, as the parable supposes; much less were they called first, and bid to work in the vineyard: but, on the contrary John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles, were first, and only sent to the Jews; and God, as yet, was not come even in the external ministry of the word to the Gentiles; nor were they brought to repentance and obedience: but by them are meant two sorts of people, among the Jews, the Scribes and Pharisees, and publicans and sinners; as the application of the parable, by our Lord himself, most clearly shows: these were both the sons of God; not only by creation, as all men are, all having, in this sense, but one common father, whose offspring they be; but also by national adoption; for to all, who were Israelites, according to the flesh, whether good men, or bad men, alike belonged the general privilege of adoption, (~~<BIB>~~ Romans 9:4). This publicans and sinners had an equal right to, as well as the Scribes and Pharisees, though they were not all the sons of God by special grace, or spiritual adoption:

and he came to the first; the publicans and sinners among the Jews, by the ministry of John the Baptist, Christ, and his disciples, who first and chiefly preached to such sort of persons;

and said, son, go work today in my vineyard: by the “vineyard”, is meant the kingdom of God, or of heaven, the Gospel church state, the then present dispensation of things, which was set up, and which men were called to embrace and enter into; the doors of which the Pharisees, who pretended to have the key of knowledge, did all they could to shut up, and hinder persons going in, as they refused to do themselves: this is called it a “vineyard”; (See Gill on “~~<BIB>~~ Matthew 20:1”). To work in it signifies to hear the word preached, to believe in the Messiah, embrace his doctrines, and submit to his ordinances, particularly the ordinance of baptism, which was the then principal ordinance of that dispensation. The time of working in it is “today”; directly, immediately, and whilst it is day; for the hour cometh when no man can work, and when all these means and ordinances will be at an end, and attending on them will be over: the argument used to engage hereunto, is taken from the relation the person stood in as a “son”, highly favoured by God, with the blessing of national adoption, besides that of natural sonship common to all mankind.

Ver. 29. *He answered and said, I will not,* etc.] Which answer fitly expresses the language and practice of openly profane and unregenerate sinners, who will not come to Christ, that they may have life; nor will they serve the Lord, but are bent upon indulging their lusts; nor will they be subject to the law of God; nor will they hear and receive the Gospel of Christ, or submit to his ordinances, and are averse to every good work: where is man's free will? this is the true picture of it; man has no will naturally to that which is good.

But afterward he repented, and went: a change of mind was wrought in him, and this produced a change of life and conversation: so, many of the publicans and sinners repented of their sins of disobedience, and rebellion against God, under the ministry of John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles; not of themselves, men do not naturally see their sin, or need of repentance; their hearts are hard and obdurate; nor have they any spiritual sense and feeling: nothing will bring them to repentance, not the most powerful ministry, the severest judgments, or the kindest mercies, without the grace of God: but it was of God, and owing to his powerful and efficacious grace, that they repented: it was his will they should come to repentance: he called them to it, and gave it to them, as a free grace gift of his: and they repented not in a mere legal way, with a legal repentance, which lies in a mere conviction of the outward acts of sin; in an external sorrow for it, in horror and terror of mind about it, and in shedding tears for it, accompanied with a cessation from the grosser acts of sin, and an outward reformation of life and manners: but they repented in an evangelical manner, as such do, who are really converted, and spiritually instructed; who are true believers in Christ, have views, and, at least, hopes of pardoning grace and mercy; and have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Spirit: the repentance of such lies in a spiritual sight and sense of sin, of the evil nature of indwelling sin, and the exceeding sinfulness of it, as well as of the outward actions of life; in a hearty, godly sorrow for it, because committed against a God of purity, grace, and goodness; in a loathing it, and themselves for it; in a holy shame, and blushing, on account of it; and is attended with an ingenuous confession of it, and forsaking it: the consequence of which is, that such go readily and cheerfully into the Lord's vineyard; hear the word with all diligence, receive it with gladness; walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord; and are taught, by the grace that has appeared to them, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world.

Ver. 30. *And he came to the second*, etc.] The Scribes and Pharisees, by the ministry of John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles also:

and said likewise; the same things as to the other son, the publicans and sinners; calling them into the Gospel dispensation, to hear the word, embrace truth, attend on ordinances, and labour in promoting the kingdom, and interest of the Messiah, whilst they had the light of the Gospel with them. Urging also the relation they stood in to God, as a part of the Jewish body; to whom, among other external privileges, the adoption belonged:

and he answered and said, I go, sir, and went not: the word “go” is not in the generality of the Greek copies; the phrase is only “I sir”, though it is rightly enough supplied as to the sense. Beza says, it was in his most ancient copy; and so it is in the Arabic and Persic versions, and in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; though it is not in the Syriac and Ethiopic versions. So, the Scribes and Pharisees seemed pleased with the ministry of John for a while, and at first were forward to submit to his baptism, and were very inquisitive about the Messiah: yet, when he was declared in John’s ministry, and by his own doctrine, and miracles, they refused to give in to the belief of him; they would neither enter into the Gospel kingdom, embrace the doctrines, and obey the commands of it themselves, nor suffer others to enter in; but, as much as in them lay, by their reproaches, menaces, and excommunications, deterred them from it. They, were like some other persons, who promise fair, and talk much of doing good works, but do none; teach the people to do them, but do not perform them themselves, though they would seem to do them; make great pretensions to them, boast of them, and trust in them; and therefore, of all men, ought to be careful to maintain them, and yet do the least.

Ver. 31. *Whether of them twain did the will of his father?* etc.] This is the question put by Christ, upon the preceding parable to the chief priests, elders, and Scribes;

they say unto him, the first: an answer which natural reason, and common sense, directed them to; and therefore they give it out at once, directly, without staying upon it, and demurring about it; though they seemed not to be aware of the application of it to themselves, which follows:

Jesus saith unto them, verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots; that is, such who had been so; (See Gill on “~~490~~ Matthew 9:10”).

go into the kingdom of God before you. They are signified by the first son, who repenting went, and did the will of his father: these repented under John's ministry, were called, and brought to repentance by the preaching of Christ, and his apostles: these justified God, their Father, by being baptized with John's baptism: these embraced the Messiah, believed in him, and were the first in his kingdom, and set an example to the chief among the Jews to follow: and it is easy to observe, that a poor profane sinner may, by the grace of God, be brought to repentance, that before was obstinate, rebellious, and disobedient, and be made willing to go and work in the Lord's vineyard here, and be at last glorified; when a self righteous person, notwithstanding all his fair promises and resolutions to do good, his professions of, and pretensions to religion, neither repents of his sins, nor believes in Christ; has no share in the kingdom of grace here, nor will he enter into the kingdom of glory.

Ver. 32. *For John came unto you in a way of righteousness,* etc.] He had a commission from God; he was no impostor; the doctrine he taught was true, and which he faithfully delivered; his life and conversation were unblamable; there was nothing in his credentials, ministry, and conduct, that could justly be found fault with:

and ye believed him not; to be the forerunner of the Messiah, or the Elias that was to come; nor attended to the doctrine of repentance preached by him, nor were subject to the ordinance of baptism he administered; nor gave any assent, or credit, to the Messiah he so manifestly pointed out:

but the publicans and harlots believed him; what he said concerning the wrath to come, and the miserable state and danger they were in; and they repented of their sins, and confessed them, and were baptized of him in Jordan; believing the testimony he gave of Jesus of Nazareth being the Messiah, and Son of God:

and ye, when ye had seen it; the repentance and faith of these persons, and what a wonderful reformation was wrought in them,

repented not afterwards; of their disobedience, impenitence, and unbelief, after they had seen the effects of John's ministry on these very profligate sinners, and after, the death of John; who, by his constancy, zeal, and faithfulness, had shown himself to be a true, and upright minister of the word; and afterwards under the ministry of Christ, and his apostles, by,

whom the same doctrines were preached, and the same ordinances administered,

that ye might believe him; the testimony he has left behind him concerning the Messiah.

Ver. 33. *Hear another parable*, etc.] Which, though Luke says was spoken to the people, who, were gathered round about him, yet was directed to, and against the chief priests; who continued with him till it was delivered, and the application of it made; when they perceived it was spoken of them. The design of it is, to set forth the many favours and privileges bestowed on the Jewish nation; their unfruitfulness, and the ingratitude of the principal men among them; and their barbarous usage of the servants of the Lord, and particularly of the Son of God himself: the consequence of which would be, the removal of the Gospel from them, and the miserable destruction of them. So that this parable is partly a narrative, of some things past, and partly a prophecy of some things to come:

there was a certain householder: by whom the great God of heaven and earth is meant; who may be so called, either with respect to the whole world, which is an house of his building, and the inhabitants of it are his family, who live, are nourished, and supplied by him; or to the church, the house of the living God, the family in heaven and in earth, called the household of God, and of faith; or to the people of Israel, often called the house of Israel, the family, above all the families of the earth, God took notice of, highly favoured, and dwelt among.

Which planted a vineyard: of the form of a vineyard, the manner of planting it, and the size of it, the Jews say many things in their Misna ^{f1143}.

“He that plants a row of five vines, the school of Shammai say, “it is a vineyard”; but the school of Hillell say, it is not a vineyard, unless there are two rows — he that plants two vines over against two, and one at the tail or end, *urk hz yrh*, “lo! this is a vineyard”; (it was a little vineyard;) but if two over against two, and one between the two, or two over against two, and one in the midst, it is no vineyard, unless there are two over against two, and one at the tail or end.”

Again ^{f1144},

“a vineyard that is planted with less than four cubits (between every row), R. Simeon says, is no vineyard; but the wise men say it is a vineyard.”

And the decision is according to them. Now by this vineyard is meant, the house of Israel and the men of Judah, the nation of the Jews, as in (~~2887~~ Isaiah 5:7) from whence our Lord seems to have taken many of the ideas expressed in this parable; who were a people separated from the rest of the world, and set with valuable plants, from whom fruit might reasonably be expected: the planting of them designs the removing them out of Egypt, the driving out the natives before them, and settling them in the land of Canaan, where they were planted with choice vines, such as Joshua, Caleb, etc. and where they soon became a flourishing people, though for their iniquities, often exposed to beasts of prey, the neighbouring nations, that were suffered at times to break in upon them. The Jews often speak ^{f1145} of the house of Israel, as the vineyard of the Lord of hosts, and even call their schools and universities vineyards: hence we read ^{f1146} of *hnbyb m̄rk*, the vineyard in Jabneh, where the scholars were placed in rows, as in a vineyard.

And hedged it round about; as it was usual to set a hedge, or make a wall round a vineyard, which according to the Jewish writers, was to be ten hands high, and four broad; for they ask ^{f1147},

“*rdg hz ya*, “what is a hedge?” That which is ten hands, high.”

And elsewhere ^{f1149},

“An hedge that encompasses a vineyard, which is less than ten hands high, or which is ten hands high, but not four hands broad, it has no circuit (or void place between that and the vines) — an hedge which is ten hands high, and so a ditch which is ten hands deep, and four broad, lo! this is lawful to plant a vineyard on one side of it, and herbs on the other; even a fence of reeds, if there is between the reeds the space of three hands, lo! this divides between the vineyard and the herbs, as an hedge.”

By this “hedge” is designed, either the law, not the oral law, or the traditions of the elders, which the Jews ^{f1149} call *hrwtl gys*, “an hedge for the law”, which was none of God’s setting, but their own; but either the ceremonial law, which distinguished them from other people, was a middle

wall of partition between them, and the nations of the world, and kept them from coming among them, and joining together; or the moral law, which taught them their duty to God and man, and was the means of keeping them within due bounds; or else the protection of them by the power of God, which was an hedge about them, is here intended; and which was very remarkable at the time of their three feasts of passover, pentecost, and tabernacles; when all their males went up to Jerusalem, and the whole country was, left an easy prey to the nations about them; but God preserved them, and, according to his promise, suffered not their neighbours to have any inclination or desire after their land.

And digged a winepress in it; which is not **yrj**, “the ditch”, that went through a, vineyard; for this cannot be said of a winepress, and is Dr. Lightfoot’s mistake^{f1150}; but **tg**, “the winefat”, in which they squeezed the grapes and made the wine, and this used to be in the vineyard: the rule about it is this,

“**urkbç tgh**, the winepress that is ten hands deep and four broad, R. Eliezer says, they may set in it; but the wise men do forbid it^{f1151} .”

By this may be meant, the altar where the drink offerings of wine were poured forth; and so the Targumist^{f1152} renders it by **yj bdm**, “my altar I have given them, to atone for their sins”: though one of their commentators^{f1153}, by it, understands the prophets, who taught Israel the law, that their works might be good before God and men; they urged and pressed them to the performance of them, as grapes are squeezed in the winepress:

and built a tower; the same the Jews call **hrmwç**, “the watch house”; which was an high place, in which the watchman stood to keep^{f1154} the vineyard, and which was built in the vineyard; of this they say,

“**urkbç hrmwç**, the “watch house which is in the vineyard”, that is ten hands high and four broad, they set in it^{f1155} .”

By this is meant, either the city or Jerusalem, which stood in the midst, and on the highest part of the land of Israel; or the temple, which stood on the highest part of Jerusalem, where the priests and Levites kept their watch

every night; and so the Targumist ^{f1156} interprets it, by *yçdqm*, “my sanctuary I built among them”: that is, the temple:

and let it out to husbandmen; of which there were different sorts, as there were different methods of hiring and letting out fields and vineyards among the Jews: one sort was called *rkwçh*, and such was he, who hired of his neighbour a field to sow in it, or a vineyard to eat of the fruit of it, for a certain sum of money yearly; (see ^{<281>}Song of Solomon 8:11) another sort was called *rkwj h*, and this was one that hired a field, or a vineyard, and agreed to give the proprietor of it yearly, so many measures of the fruit thereof, whether it yielded more or less; and there was a third sort, called *syra*, or *l bqm*, and such was he, who agreed to give the owner half, or a third, or a fourth part of the increase of the field, or vineyard ^{f1157}. Now it is not of the former, but of the latter sort of letting out and farming, that this is to be understood; not of letting it out for money, but for fruit, as appears from (^{<4234>}Matthew 21:34) and by the husbandmen are meant, the rulers of the Jews, civil and ecclesiastical, especially the latter; the priests, Levites, and Scribes, who were intrusted with the care of the Jewish people, to guide and instruct them, and cultivate the knowledge of divine things among them, that they might bring forth fruits of righteousness; and to offer their gifts and sacrifices, and the like, which are meant by letting out the vineyard to them: and went into afar country; which must be interpreted consistent with the omnipresence of God, who is every where, and cannot be said properly to move from place to place; but fills heaven and earth with his presence, and cannot be contained in either: but this phrase seems to design his taking up his residence in the thick darkness, in the tabernacle and temple, when the civil and ecclesiastical state of the Jews was settled, and God did not appear to them in that visible manner he had done before; but having fixed their order of government, worship, and duty, left them to themselves and their rulers; for many years; in which he expressed much longsuffering and patience towards them.

Ver. 34. *And when the time of the fruit drew near*, etc.] Of gathering the fruit, when it was ripe, and might be eaten, or profit made of it, according to the law in (^{<8923>}Leviticus 19:23,24,25). The fruit of all manner of trees, for the first three years, was uncircumcised; it was not to be eaten, nor any profit made of it, and on the fourth year it was to be holy to praise the Lord with; being either given to the priests, or eaten by the owners before the Lord at Jerusalem; and on the fifth year it might be eaten, and made use

of for profit, and henceforward every year; which law regarded the fruit of the vine, as any other fruit: hence it is said ^{f1158}, that

“the grapes of the vineyard of the fourth year, the sanhedrim ordered that they should be brought up to Jerusalem, a day’s journey on every side, so that they might crown or adorn the streets with fruits.”

To this time of fruit, and the custom of bringing it up to Jerusalem, the allusion seems to be here. Thus, God after a long time, after he had waited a great while for fruit from the Jewish nation, from whom much might have been expected, by reason of the advantages they enjoyed; he sent his servants to the husbandmen: by his servants are meant, the prophets of the Old Testament; who were sent by God from time to time, to the kings, priests, and people of the Jews; to instruct them in their duty, to exhort them to the performance of it, to reprove them for their sins, to stir them up to repentance, and to bring forth fruits meet for it, signified in the next clause:

that they might receive the fruits of it; of the vineyard from the husbandmen, for the use of the owner; for fruits of justice and judgment, of righteousness and holiness, might be justly expected and demanded of such persons, to be brought forth by them, to the honour and glory of God.

Ver. 35. *And the husbandmen took his servants*, etc.] They seized and laid hold of them in a rude and violent manner: so far were they from treating these servants with respect, as they ought to have done; considering whose they were, from whom they came, and upon what account; and also so far from delivering to them the fruit due to their master, or excusing their inability to make a suitable return, as might be expected, they use them very roughly:

and beat one; either with the fist, as Jeremiah was struck by Pashur, the son of Immer, the priest, one of these husbandmen, (^{<2400>}Jeremiah 20:1,2) and as Micaiah was smitten on the cheek by Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, the false prophet, (^{<4823>}2 Chronicles 18:23) or with a scourge, and may refer to the punishment of beating with forty stripes, save one, by which the skin was flayed off; as the word here signifies; for some of these servants had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, (^{<3813>}Hebrews 11:36). And killed another; that is, with the sword. There were four kinds of death in the power of the sanhedrim, of which this is one, and what follows is

another; and were these, stoning, burning, killing (i.e. beheading with the sword), and strangling: the manner of executing this punishment here expressed, was this:

“They cut off the person’s head **Pyysb**, “with a sword”, in the manner the government orders it. R. Judah says, this is indecent (i.e. to cut off his head standing, they do not do so), but they put his head upon a block, and cut it off with an axe; they reply to him, there is no death more abominable than this ^{f1159}.”

So the prophets, in the time of Elijah, were killed with the sword, (^{<1194>}1 Kings 19:14) see also (^{<2713>}Daniel 11:33).

And stoned another; as they did Zechariah, (^{<4221>}2 Chronicles 24:21) and doubtless many others; since Jerusalem had the character of killing the prophets, and stoning them that were sent unto her, (^{<4237>}Matthew 23:37) these seemed such that were stoned, but not killed; but as Mark says, were wounded in the head with the stones thrown at them, and shamefully handled, and sadly abused.

Ver. 36. *Again he sent other servants*, etc.] Meaning, perhaps, such as suffered in the times of the Maccabees:

more than the first; their number was greater, though their office was the same, at least not higher:

and they did unto them likewise; they beat them with rods, they killed them with the sword, and stoned them, (^{<38136>}Hebrews 11:36,37).

Ver. 37. *But last of all*, etc.] In the last times, in the last days, in the end of the world, the Jewish world, at the close of their ecclesiastic and civil state; after all the prophets had been sent, and finished their course, came the greatest prophet of all, to seal up the vision and prophecy:

he sent unto them son; not a servant as before, but a son; his own son, his only begotten son, the son of his love, his dearly beloved one; him he sent to these husbandmen the Jews. The Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, was sent only to the house of Israel: he was the minister of the circumcision; he was the great prophet raised up among them, and was sent to bless them, by turning them from their iniquities; he came to them, to his own, to them of his own nation, but they received him not:

saying, they will reverence my son. The Son of God is to be revered equally as his Father, since he is in nature and glory equal to him; and it is the will of his Father he should be so revered, as he is by the angels in heaven, and by the saints, both in heaven and in earth; but did these husbandmen reverence him? no; they despised and rejected him; they reproached and traduced him, as the vilest of men, and used him in the most cruel and barbarous manner. And did not his Father know this? yes; this is certain from his omniscience, which reaches to all future events, the most minute and contingent; and from the predictions of the usage of these persons of him, delivered long before it came to pass. Luke says, “it may be they will reverence him”: so that it was not a positive affirmation, that they would do it, and which also is to be understood after the manner of men: that humanly speaking, it might be expected that they would give him reverence, in consideration of the dignity of his person, his character, and relation to God, which was his due and their duty; but he had a very different treatment from them.

Ver. 38. *But when the husbandmen saw the son,* etc.] Whom many of them knew, though some did not: some were entirely ignorant of him; some knew him, but durst not confess him, yet were not injurious to him; others acted against light and conscience, with spite and malice, as did these men. They expected the Messiah about this time; they knew, by prophecy, it could not be long ere he appeared: when they saw Jesus of Nazareth, they knew by various circumstances, by all the characters of the Messiah meeting in him, and by his miracles, that he must be the same.

They said among themselves; privately, not openly to the people,

this is the heir; as indeed he is of all things, as the Son of God, and as the mediator of the new covenant: he is heir of all that his Father has, as he is his natural, essential, and only begotten Son; and as mediator, he is heir of all things, natural, spiritual, and eternal, for the use and benefit of his church and people, who are also his portion and inheritance: but here it seems to denote, his being heir to the throne of Israel, the government of the Jewish nation, as he was the son of David; and the Jews confess^{f1160}, that because it was said that Jesus of Nazareth was *twkl ml bwrq*, “near to the kingdom”, therefore they put him to death:

come let us kill him, and seize on his inheritance: concluding, that could they be rid of him, their nation would be in peace, their temple would

stand, and temple worship and service continue, and they remain in their office and authority undisturbed; the contrary of which they feared, should he be suffered to live; though what they feared from his life, befell them upon, and in consequence of his death, quite beyond all their counsels and expectations.

Ver. 39. *And they caught him*, etc.] Seized and laid hold of him, in a rude and violent manner, as they had some of the servants before. This regards their apprehending of Christ in the garden, by a band of soldiers and officers, sent by the chief priests and Pharisees, who with swords and staves took him, bound him, and led him away:

and cast him out of the vineyard; which is not to be understood of their casting him out of the synagogue, which is never said of them; nor does it so much relate to the leading of him without the gates of Jerusalem, where they crucified him, though this is a sense not to be despised and rejected; but rather, to the delivery of him to those, that were without the vineyard of the Jewish church and nation, to the Gentiles; to be mocked, scourged, and put to death by them:

and slew him: for though the sentence of death was pronounced on him by Pilate, an Heathen governor, and was executed by the Roman soldiers; yet it was through the instigation and at the pressing importunity of these husbandmen, the Jewish rulers; and who were afterwards frequently charged by the apostles with the murder of him.

Ver. 40. *When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh*, etc.] In a way of providence, to call these husbandmen to an account; not only for the fruit they were to bring to him; but for their barbarity to his servants, the prophets, time after time; and especially, for the inhuman usage and murder of his own son;

what will he do unto those husbandmen? This question is put to the chief priests, elders, and Scribes: and they themselves, who are designed hereby, are made judges in this case, just as the inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah are, in (²³¹⁴Isaiah 5:4) which passage of Scripture our Lord had greatly in view when he spake this parable.

Ver. 41. *They say unto him*, etc.] Either the common people that were about him; or rather the chief priests, scribes, and elders, to whom he put the question; little thinking then, that they were the persons intended in this parable:

he will miserably destroy those wicked men: in saying which, they own that persons guilty of such crimes, as beating, killing, and stoning, servants sent to them by the proprietor of the vineyard, to receive his due and proper fruit, and at last murdering his son and heir, were very wicked persons, and deserved the severest punishments to be inflicted upon them, and that without mercy; nor could it be thought, but this must and would be unavoidably their case, when the Lord of the vineyard should come: thus tacitly did they condemn themselves as wicked men, and as deserving the worst of deaths, who in a few days after this, were concerned in the death of the Son of God:

and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen; allowing it to be a very just thing, not only to put these men to the most miserable and tormenting death that could be devised, but to take the vineyard out of the hands of their posterity, and let it out to other persons; as it was a righteous thing with God, to remove the church state, Gospel and ordinances from the Jews, and deliver them to the Gentiles:

which shall render him the fruits in their seasons; that is, his due, and that in proper time. The other evangelists relate these words, as spoken by Christ: for the reconciliation of which let it be observed, that they were first spoken by the Jews, as is here signified; and after that were spoken by Christ, confirming what they said, and applying it to them; upon which they said, “God forbid”; that we should ever be guilty of such crimes, incur such punishment, and this should be our case: but in proof of it, that so it would be, our Lord alleges the following words.

Ver. 42. *Jesus saith unto them, did ye never read the Scriptures*, etc.] The passage which stands in (^{<HB2>}Psalm 118:22,23).

The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Very appropriately is this Scripture cited, and applied to the present case; which expresses the rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish builders, priests, and scribes: the whole Psalm may be understood of the Messiah. R. David Kimchi owns ^{f1161}, that there is a division among their Rabbins about it: some say that the Psalm is spoken of David, and others, that it is spoken of the days of the Messiah; and these are certainly in the right; and as for this particular passage, it is applied by some of them to the Messiah: so on mentioning (^{<HB5>}Hosea 3:5) they ^{f1162} say,

“David was king in this world, and David shall be king in the time to come: wherefore it is said, the stone which the builders refused, etc.”

And one of their noted commentators^{f1163} on those words, “though thou be little among the thousands of Judah”, has this note:

“It is fit thou shouldest be little among the families of Judah, because of the impurity of Ruth the Moabitess, which is in thee: out of thee shall come forth unto me, Messiah, the son of David; for so he saith, “the stone which the builders refused”, etc.”

Christ is often in Scripture compared to a stone, and is called the stone of Israel; is said to be a stone of stumbling to some, and a precious tried stone to others: is represented as a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, and on which are seven eyes: and is fitly compared to one, for his usefulness in the spiritual building the church, where he is as both the foundation and corner stone, and for his strength and duration. Christ is the sure, firm, and everlasting foundation, which God has laid in Zion, and the only one of any avail; nor can any other be laid to any purpose; and if he is neglected, and laid aside, in the ministration of the word, the building which men endeavour to rear, or exhort unto, will come to nothing. Whoever build on him are safe, and on nothing else: Christ is the foundation, on which the church, and every believer, are built, and therefore will abide; for the gates of hell cannot prevail against them: the covenant of grace is immoveable, being established in him; its mercies are sure, and its promises yea and amen: the salvation of immortal souls is certain, resting upon him; the faith and hope of the saints fail not, being directed to, and settled on him: the house not made with hands, which is in heaven, is an eternal one; and the city, which has foundations, is a continuing one, because of the concern that Christ has in it; and though he is of such eminent use and importance in the building, yet, as such, the “builders rejected” him: by the builders are meant, the Jewish rulers, both political and ecclesiastical, especially the latter, who pretended to instruct, and build up the people in knowledge and understanding; but in a very bad way did they do it, and upon a very sandy foundation, upon their fleshly privileges, their moral righteousness, and the observance of the ceremonial law, and the traditions of the elders. The Jews used to call their doctors and their scholars “builders”^{f1164}: says R. Jochanan,

“the disciples of the wise men are called *yanb*, “builders”, because they study in the building of the world all their days, which is the law.”

These rejected the Messiah, refused to receive, and acknowledge him as such: they disallowed and disapproved of him, as base and vile, and the most contemptible of mortals, and set him at nought, and had him in the utmost scorn and derision. And so he is rejected by some who bear the characters of builders among Christians: as when his proper deity, and eternal sonship are denied, and he is treated as a mere creature; when his satisfaction and atoning sacrifice are either wholly rejected, or little regarded, lessened, and depreciated, and repentance and good works are put in the room of them; when his imputed righteousness is opposed, and laid aside, and the righteousness of men preferred unto it, and cried up as the matter of justification in the sight of God; when his efficacious grace is represented as unnecessary to regeneration, conversion, and sanctification, and to the performance of good works; and when he is left out of public ministrations, as the way of life and salvation, as the fountain of all grace, and foundation of all happiness, and human power, free will, and moral righteousness are put in his room. But notwithstanding the former and present rejection, and ill treatment of him, he is

become the head of the corner: he is the corner stone in the building which knits and cements it together, angels and men, Jews and Gentiles; Old and New Testament saints; saints above, and saints below, and in all ages and places, all meet, and are united together in this corner stone; which also strengthens and supports the building, and holds it together, and is the ornament and beauty of it: he is the chief corner stone; he is higher than the kings of the earth; he is superior to angels, and the chiefest among ten thousands of his saints; he is exalted above all creatures, angels, and men, who, by the Jewish builders, was despised and rejected, and scarce allowed to be worthy the name of a man:

this is the Lord's doing; this stone is laid in the building by him: the rejection of him is according to his determinate counsel and foreknowledge; and the exaltation of him, above every name, is owing to him, and he is by, and at his own right hand: and

is marvellous in our eyes; in the eyes of all the saints; there being in all this such, a wonderful display of the wisdom, grace, mercy, power, and faithfulness of God.

Ver. 43. *Therefore I say unto you*, etc.] This is the application of the parable; and the words are directed to the chief priests, elders, scribes, and people of the Jews; and are delivered as what would be in consequence of the builders, rejecting the Messiah, the foundation and corner stone of the building.

The kingdom of God shall be taken from you: by which is meant, not their political estate, their civil government, which was of God, and in a short time was to depart from them, according to ancient prophecy, and which is come to pass, as the event shows; nor their legal national church state and ordinances only, or the priesthood, and the appendages of it; all which, in a little while, were shaken and removed; but the Gospel, which had been preached among them by John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles; so called because it treats of the kingdom of God, and things pertaining to it, and shows men both their right and meetness for it; the one as in the righteousness of Christ, and the other in the regenerating and sanctifying grace of the Spirit, which Gospel may be taken away from a people, as from the Jews, because of their contempt of it, and opposition to it, or lukewarmness and indifference about it, or unfruitfulness under it; and when God has no more souls to gather in by it in such a place, and which is a very unhappy case, whenever it is the case of any people: for when the Gospel is taken away, the riches of a people are gone; the glory of a nation is departed; the light of it is put out; the spiritual bread of a people is no more; the means of conversion and spiritual knowledge cease: all which have a melancholy aspect on posterity. Moreover, the Gospel church state, which was set up in Judea, may be here meant; which, though it continued and flourished a while, in process of time was to be removed: and which may be done elsewhere, as it has been in Judea, by God's suffering persecution to arise, as he did against the church of Jerusalem, whereby the ministers of the Gospel are driven into corners, or scattered abroad; or by ordering his ministers to preach no more unto such a people, as the apostles were ordered to turn from the Jews to the Gentiles; or by taking away ministers and members of churches by death, and not raising up others in their room; or by withholding a blessing from the word; or by permitting the growth of errors and heresies, which, in course of time, must issue in the dissolution of the church state in such a place, and which necessarily follows upon the removing of the Gospel:

and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Though God may take away the Gospel from a people, as he did from the Jews; yet he does

not, nor will he, as yet, take it out of the world: he gives it to another “nation”; to the Gentiles, to all the nations of the world, whither he sent his apostles to preach and where it must be preached before the end of the world comes, in order to gather his elect out of them: for not one particular nation is meant, unless the nation of God’s elect, among all nations, can be thought to be designed. It may be observed, that the Gospel, wherever it comes, it comes as a gift; it is “given”: to have it only in the external ministration of it, is a favour; and more especially to understand it spiritually; this is an unmerited gift; as is also ability to preach it: and it is likewise a national mercy wherever it comes; for though it comes in power only to a few in a nation, yet it is more or less a blessing to the whole: nor is it easy to say what temporal advantages a nation enjoys through the ministration of the Gospel in it: and where it is given, and comes in power, it brings forth fruit, as it did in all the world of the Gentiles; even the fruits of grace, and righteousness, and every good work; all which come from Christ, under the influence of his Spirit, and by the word and ordinances, as means, and highly become the Gospel, and the professors of it; and for want of which it is removed sometimes from one nation to another: for this cause it was taken from the Jews, and given to the Gentiles. One of the Jewish commentators ^{f1165} on these words, in (²⁴³⁷Jeremiah 13:17) “my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride”, has this note;

“because of your grandeur, which shall cease; because of the excellency of “the kingdom of heaven”, $\mu\upsilon\lambda\ \gamma\sigma\pi\lambda\ \hat{\iota}\tau\eta\tau\epsilon\varsigma$, “which shall be given to the profane”;

i.e. the nations of the world.

Ver. 44. *And whosoever shall fall on this stone*, etc.] This is not to be understood of believing in Christ, or of a soul’s casting itself on Christ, the foundation stone; relying on him, and building all its hopes of happiness and salvation on him; which is attended with contrition and brokenness of heart, or repentance unto life, which needed not to be repented of nor of a believer’s offending Christ by evil works, whereby his conscience is wounded, his soul is grieved, and his faith shaken; and though he is hereby in great danger, he shall not be utterly destroyed, but being recovered by repentance, shall be preserved unto salvation; but of such to whom Christ is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence: for as he is the foundation and corner stone to some, and is set for the rising of them, and to whom he is precious; so he is a stone set for the fall of others, and at which they

stumble and fall, and fall upon it: and such are they who are offended at Christ's state of humiliation on earth; at the manner of his birth, the meanness of his parentage, and education; the despicable figure he made in his person, disciples, and audience; and at his sufferings and death: and these "shall be broken": as a man that stumbles at a stone, and falls upon it, breaks his head or his bones, at least bruises himself, does not hurt the stone, but the stone hurts him; so all such as are offended at Christ, injure their own souls, being filled with prejudices against him, and contempt and disbelief of him, which if grace prevents not will issue in their everlasting destruction: but whilst there is life, the means of grace continue, the kingdom of God is not taken away; there is hope that such may be recovered from their impenitence and unbelief: "but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder". Just as if a millstone, or any stone of such like weight and bulk, was to fall upon an earthen vessel; or, as the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, by which the Messiah and his kingdom, are designed, brake in pieces the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, so that it became like the chaff of the summer threshing floor. As the former part of this verse expresses the sin of unbelievers, and the danger they are exposed unto by it, this sets forth their punishment; and has respect both to the vengeance of Christ, on the Jewish nation, at their destruction, which would fall heavy from him in his state of exaltation, for their evil treatment of him in his state of humiliation; and to his severe wrath, which will be executed at the day of judgment on all unbelievers, impenitent Christless sinners, who have both offended him, and been offended at him; when their destruction will be inevitable, their salvation irretrievable, and their souls irrecoverably lost, and ruined. Some have thought, that there is an allusion in these words to the manner of stoning among the Jews, which was this^{f1166}:

"the place of stoning was two men's heights; one of the witnesses struck him on his loins, to throw him down from thence, to the ground: if he died, it was well; if not, they took a stone, which lay there, and was as much as two men could carry, and cast it, with all their might, upon his breast: if he died, it was well; if not, he was stoned by all Israel."

Maimonides observes^{f1167}, that

“stoning, or throwing down from the high place, was that he might fall upon the stone, or that the stone might fall upon him; and which of them either it was, the pain was the same.”

Ver. 45. *And when the chief priests and Pharisees*, etc.] Which latter, though not before mentioned, were many of them of the grand sanhedrim, as well as the chief priests, scribes, and elders: “had heard his parables”; that of the two sons being sent into the vineyard, and that of the letting out the vineyard to husbandmen,

they perceived that he spake of them: they plainly saw that they were designed by the son, that promised to go into the vineyard, but did not; only talked of works, but did not do them: and that they were the husbandmen that acted the ungrateful part to the householder, and the cruel one to his servants, and would to his son, their own consciences told them they were the men. They knew that the whole was levelled against them, and designed for them, and exactly hit their case.

Ver. 46. *But when they sought to lay hands on him*, etc.] Not that they attempted by any outward action to apprehend him, and carry him off, or by any immediate act of violence to take away his life; but they secretly wished, and earnestly desired to do it: they were so irritated and provoked, that they could scarcely keep their hands off of him, and could have been glad of an opportunity of satiating their revenge upon him: and whereby they would but have fulfilled what he in this parable had prophetically said of them: and yet so hardened were they, though they understood his meaning, they were not deterred thereby, but on another account:

they feared the multitude; which were now about Christ, lest there should be a tumult, and they should take the part of Christ against them, to which they seemed inclined; when their lives, had they attempted anything of this nature, would have been in a great deal of danger:

because they took him for a prophet; by the doctrines which he taught, by the boldness and freedom of speech he used, and by the miracles he wrought: wherefore, though they might not all of them believe that he was the Messiah, or that prophet Moses spoke of; yet, since it was exceeding manifest, that he was a teacher sent of God, and endowed with very wonderful gifts; and from whom many of them had received singular benefits, if not for their souls, yet for their bodies; being healed by him of their lameness, or blindness, or other diseases; therefore would not suffer

him to be abused, and ill treated by them: so that, as Mark says, “they left him, and went their way”; to consult together what was proper to be done, and wait for a better opportunity to seize him.